

hottest parts of the day but did not sit in them by night; they roosted in the neighbouring trees. The nests were hot to the touch even at 2 a.m.

Desertion of the nest after it has been tampered with varies not only with different species but also among birds of the same species. Some birds will continue to sit after some of the eggs have been stolen or if the nest is handled in any way, while others of the same species will desert the nest on the slightest provocation.

The common bloodsucker (*Calotes versicolor*) is mainly insectivorous—that he occasionally robs nests is evident from the above note. But we could hardly recommend his extermination on these grounds.—EDS.]

XIV.—THE TAIL-RACKET OF *DISSEMURUS PARADISEUS*

I am grateful to Mr. Salim Ali for having pointed out a mistake in my paper on the Study of Indian Birds regarding the racket of *Dissemurus paradiseus*. Mr. Salim Ali is wrong in assuming that I copied my information from the two editions of the *Fauna*; I examined the specimens in my collection very carefully and drew the illustration from one of them. Mr. Salim Ali seems to think it curious that the illustration agrees with the condition described, but he does not suggest how the condition should be otherwise illustrated as in fact the racket is borne in such a position that it appears to be the outer web; that it is not so is not apparent to my eyes, either naked or with a lens. If, however, the shaft of the feather is drawn slowly through the tightly closed nails of the finger and thumb, it slowly rotates, from which I accept Mr. Salim Ali's contention that, what appears to be the outer web, is really the inner web. It is an interesting point and one must assume, I suppose, that the weight of the rackets was originally responsible for the twist in the feathers.

BATTLE, SUSSEX,

HUGE WHISTLER.

August 18, 1929.

XV.—NOTE ON THE NESTING HABITS OF THE SOUTHERN RED-WHISKERED BULBUL (*OTOCOMPSA* *EMERIA FUSCICAUDATA*)

The fourth reappearance of this bird, to nest in a fern-pot in my verandah, reminds me that I made some notes of its appearances on former occasions. A pair of the birds first built their nest in a hanging pot of ferns in the verandah in front of my drawing-room during the first week of last September. Only two eggs were laid, but this small clutch may be explained by the comparatively large size of the eggs as compared to the hen bird. The nest was composed entirely of casuarina leaves, very neatly and closely woven together, and this same nest has served to rear three successive broods in without anything being done in the nature of

repairs. The two young birds which resulted departed some time in October and were fed fearlessly by the parents although we sat to have our afternoon tea daily within a yard of the nest.

The parent birds reappeared again towards the end of November when, again, two eggs were laid and successfully hatched out. The third appearance of the same two birds was in March, twin fledglings resulting for the third time. A few weeks before this we had invested in a cat, and I rather feared that this animal might scare our lodgers away. They evinced no fear whatever of it however. One night, during a particularly heavy thunderstorm, the hen-bird, which was sitting on the eggs, flew from the nest into the lighted drawing-room, apparently scared by the lightning and crashing thunder. The cat immediately pounced upon it, but was in its turn pounced upon by the servants and the scared bird released from its jaws, apparently quite unharmed. It was restored to its nest and I was much surprised to find it sitting peacefully on the nest on the following morning. One of the young birds left the nest a day before the second and the parents were greatly put to it to prevent the first from straying whilst they continued to feed the second. This latter left the nest on the following day but was unable to fly, and finding it on the ground, one of the servants placed a wicker basket over it to prevent the cat getting at it. Shortly afterwards, I found the parents sitting on top on the inverted basket trying to feed the prisoner. I, thereupon, upturned the basket, caught the second fledgling and placed the basket in a croton bush in the compound. I rather feared that this would scare the parents away and that the young birds would be deserted. My fears were groundless, however, the birds followed me and at once took over their offspring, the whole party leaving us two days later.

From May onwards, the birds have not been seen, but to-day, the 16th August, they are back again and now busy trimming up the nest, which is a little the worse for wear from the monsoon and the Mali's attentions.

It would appear, therefore, that these birds nest thrice yearly, laying two eggs on each occasion, the nesting season ranging from September to early May. A pair of these birds built their nest in a similar situation in my bungalow in Mercara, Coorg, 1923, so that it would appear to be a habit of the species.

(N.B. Since the above was written, the mother bird has laid two eggs and the fledglings are already half-grown.)

CALICUT,

September 19, 1929.

F. C. FRASER,

Lt.-Col., I.M.S.

[The Southern race of the Red-whiskered Bulbul usually lays two eggs in a clutch—occasionally 3—while the Northern race (*O. e. emeria*) normally produces three to four. Baker (*Faun. Brit. Ind.*, new ed., Vol. I, p. 396) gives March and April as the breeding season, but states that many nests may be found between February and August and odd ones in almost every month of the year. The fecundity and fertility of birds, though innate in many

species, may be influenced by external factors such as environment and the abundance or scarcity of the food supply.

Ticehurst has shown (*Birds of Sind*, Ibis, July 1922, p. 544) that the White-eared Bulbul (*Pycononotus l. leucotis*), which normally breeds in Sind between March and April, repeats the performance in June and September in years when the rainfall provides plenty of leafy cover and abundant food in the shape of fruit and insects.—EDS.]

XVI.—MIGRATION OF THE PIED CRESTED-CUCKOO

(*COCCYSTES JACOBINUS*)

With reference to Whistler's note on the 'Migration of the Pied Cuckoo' and in continuation of my letter of 15th April, I am writing to inform you that I have been specially on the look-out for the first appearance of the Pied Cuckoo this year in the neighbourhood of Ajmer.

On Sunday, 30th June, the weather was very sultry, and towards afternoon thunder clouds began to gather on the horizon threatening rain before night. Such were the conditions when I saw the Pied Cuckoo for the first time.

It was about 5 p.m. and the place was the hill range between Ajmer and Nasirabad. These hills are quartzite and are covered with thorny scrub and spurge and are typical of all the hill ranges round Ajmer.

I had been on the spot for about half an hour and was just about to retrace my steps towards the road and my car because the storm was about to burst, when I heard the bird call in the distance; the call was repeated at intervals, coming closer and closer, until the bird flew almost directly over my head. At the same time the first drops began to fall. I heard it no more that evening, although I remained in the locality till sunset, the rain having lasted less than half an hour only.

The rainfall has been rather unusual and irregular here this year. There were heavy showers at the end of May and the middle of June: from the middle of June onwards, the conditions were generally monsoonish though the rainfall was negligible. Grass had begun to grow and the thorny scrub was bursting into leaf.

I had been on the same spot, sitting up for a panther, or birds nesting, every Sunday throughout June, except the 9th, without seeing or hearing the bird. On the following Wednesday, the 3rd July, I saw two birds fly into a babul tree on the Golf-course which lies under a hill called Madar. The same night there was heavy rain.

Since then I have seen numerous Pied Cuckoos on every occasion on which I have entered any of the hill ranges round about Ajmer.

The bird may therefore be termed common in such situations. I have since seen the bird on two occasions in Balul, Kikar Jungle, at considerable distances from any hills.